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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
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Agenda item 5
Methods of work of the Forum with the United Nations system

Chairperson's summary of discussion

Methods of work of the Forum with the United Nations system

Data disaggregation

1. Jackie Sims (World Health Organization) reported on and summarized the United Nations paper on the disaggregation of data. She suggested that the present recommendation could capitalize on the global trends of data collection. She also noted that ethnicity could be inserted into the Millennium Development Goals but that both qualitative and quantitative data was needed. It was also noted that the nature of data collected was governed by the purpose for which it would be used. She suggested that a working group or workshop on data collection be established to advance the issue.

2. Willie Littlechild asked if the recognition or non-recognition of the term "indigenous peoples" affected the global collection of data on indigenous peoples. Ms. Sims provided an explanation of the difficulties of using the term "indigenous peoples" on a worldwide basis. She also stressed that the paper provided represented a very preliminary look at the issues involving data collection. Mr. Kouevi noted that there might be differences between official data and non-official qualitative data but that both were necessary in order to obtain a complete picture of the situation of indigenous peoples. Ms. Sims noted that United Nations agencies needed to work with officially reported data. Lee Sweptson (International Labour Organization (ILO)) noted that there were creative ways of analysing unofficial data to create an accurate picture of issues that might not be officially recognized. Wayne Lord requested that States pay close attention to the requests of the Forum for accurate data and information.

3. Marcos Mattias Alonzo recommended that the Forum draw on the wealth of good work done by many countries, which already provided excellent statistics on indigenous peoples. Those good practices could be collated and provided as

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examples for other countries to consider. Also, Member States with good practices could perhaps share those in a workshop with other Member States. The representative of the United Nations Children's Fund spoke of good work done in this area in Bolivia and how it was used to provide better education and health services to local communities. Zinaida Stogalschikova noted the effective use of data that provided disaggregated data on ethnicity. Such data could be sent to the secretariat for analysis.

4. Otilia Lux de Coti discussed advances made in the census in Guatemala, which was providing a better picture of the indigenous peoples. She also noted that linguistic maps were helpful. The representative of the Inter-American Development Bank noted the convening of two expert meetings to ensure that statistics of indigenous peoples were collected through country censuses in Latin America.

Donations to the voluntary fund

5. The Vice-President of the World Bank informed the Forum of his intention to take to the Board of the Bank a submission to establish a fund with three targets:

(a) Dedicated small grants;

(b) Financial contribution to the Forum;

(c) Capacity-building for indigenous peoples in the Andean Community (as a pilot project).

6. The Vice-President of the World Bank was thanked by the Chairperson and Pashuram Tamang, Yuji Iwasawa and Mililani Trask for the Bank's support of indigenous initiatives.

7. The representative of Denmark recognized the good work of the newly established Forum secretariat and the excellent documentation that had been prepared for the Forum in such a short time. The Danish Government would donate one million Danish kroner to the Forum, without conditions, to advance the good work of the Forum, and called on other member States to consider supporting this worthy cause.

Methods of work: Forum members

8. Forum members raised a number of issues that had interfered with the performance of their duties as United Nations experts, including but not limited to access to United Nations meetings, visa problems for Forum members and indigenous delegates, especially concerning access to the United States of America, the need for a regular budget for the Forum and the lack of indigenous policies within many United Nations bodies. Mililani Trask noted the importance of incorporating the outcomes of world conferences (especially the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development) into the work of the Forum. Ms. Nicolaisen inquired about a systematic approach by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) concerning its work with traditional knowledge and whether ethical considerations as well as legal obligations were taken into account in its work.

Methods of work: member States

9. The representative of Denmark stated that Denmark believed that there was no need for the Forum to appoint special advisers, but that it should tap into expertise already existing in the United Nations system, and recommended the adoption of a short-term and long-term programme of work to advance the mandated areas.

10. The representative of Mexico discussed the value of the opportunities for dialogue at the Forum, and encouraged the Chairperson and the Forum secretariat to promote more dialogue as a most useful strategy to advance the work of the Forum. The representative of Japan recalled the review of United Nations mechanisms, and suggested that after the review the resources previously used for other mechanisms, such as the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, could be redeployed to the Forum.

Methods of work: inter-agency support group perspectives (United Nations system)

11. Lee Swepston (ILO), on behalf of the Group raised the following issues in a bid to develop clear, collaborative, working guidelines within the United Nations system and between the system, the Forum and its secretariat:

(a) How to ensure that there was a two-way relationship between the Forum and the other parts of the United Nations system, with information and expertise flowing both towards the Forum and away from it;

(b) How to ensure that the Forum had a clear understanding of the place (mandates and resources) of indigenous concerns within each of the agencies/programmes, and a discussion of how the Forum could best support and encourage that work;

(c) How to ensure that budgetary allocations to indigenous issues within the United Nations system were not simply displaced from one agency/programme to another but in fact increased, and the role of the Member States in allocating human and financial resources to work on indigenous issues throughout the system;

(d) The extent to which the secretariat of the Forum would be operational and how to avoid duplication of work for which expertise already existed elsewhere. A related issue: how to request that studies and other materials for the Forum be prepared by the organizations of the United Nations system, when appropriate;

(e) How best to ensure that different parts of the United Nations system were consulted to ensure that recommendations to them were framed in the most productive way;

(f) How to avoid parallel processes and work across the system;

(g) Need to rotate Forum meetings between New York and Geneva, and perhaps to other locations.

12. WIPO discussed ways of involving Forum members in its work. Wend Wendland provided an overview of the work of WIPO regarding traditional knowledge and future meetings planned. A written report was provided for members.

Methods of work: indigenous peoples organizations

13. The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network suggested establishing mechanisms to capture the rich debate of the Forum, including summary records. He noted that adequate coordination was impossible for such a small secretariat. He suggested that indigenous issues be integrated into the United Nations system (mainstreaming). He further noted that if the work of the Forum failed to be reflected at the national level then it had failed in its work. The Artic Region Council recommended that the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2006 of the Economic and Social Council be devoted to indigenous issues.